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Advancement of women

Future operation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/175, the present report provides updated information on the critical situation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). It covers on the implementation of the measures for an institutional reform of INSTRAW proposed by the Working Group on the Future Operation of INSTRAW in its report (see A/57/330 and Add.1) and endorsed by the Assembly in resolution 57/175. It also reflects the outcome of the substantive session of 2003 of the Economic and Social Council.

Despite the endorsement by the General Assembly of the measures proposed by the Working Group, the Institute continues to face a critical financial situation.

* Submission of the present report was delayed owing to the need to reflect the outcome of the general segment of the substantive session of 2003 of the Economic and Social Council.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 9 (b) of General Assembly resolution 57/175. A report on the financial situation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) in response to paragraph 8 of Assembly resolution 57/311 will be issued later in a separate document to update the information contained in an earlier report of the Secretary-General on the financial situation of INSTRAW (A/57/797).

2. In resolution 57/175, the Assembly endorsed the recommendations made by the report of the Working Group on the Future Operation of the Institute and requested the Secretary-General to implement measures recommended by the Working Group in that regard. It also requested the Secretary-General to appoint, without delay and in consultation with the Working Group, a Director to be chosen from among candidates who demonstrate knowledge and expertise in, inter alia, gender issues and social research.

3. In its subsequent resolution 57/311 on the financial situation of INSTRAW, the Assembly urged the Secretary-General to appoint immediately a Director at the D-2 level to be based at INSTRAW headquarters in the Dominican Republic and to inform the Working Group thereafter of the designation of the nominee. The Assembly also approved the release and appropriation of the amount of $250,000 that was set aside in the contingency fund for the biennium 2002-2003.

4. In its resolution 2003/57, the Economic and Social Council decided to amend the statute of INSTRAW and requested the General Assembly to consider the final report of the Working Group. It also requested the Director of INSTRAW, in consultation with the Board, to report to the Council at its substantive session of 2004 on the implementation of the resolution. The Council also requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session on the implementation of Council resolution 2003/57.

5. The present report contains information on progress in the implementation of the measures recommended by the Working Group, and should be read in conjunction with the report of the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW to the Economic and Social Council (E/2003/59), in which the activities of INSTRAW in the period 2002-2003 are set out in more detail.

II. Implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group

A. Revision of the statute of INSTRAW

6. In its decision 47/101, the Commission on the Status of Women recommended to the Economic and Social Council that it consider the report of the Working Group (A/57/330 and Add.1) under the appropriate item at its substantive session of 2003.

7. The Working Group's recommendations for consideration by the Council at its substantive session of 2003 were set out in a letter dated 24 June 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairperson of the Working Group, addressed to the President of the Council

(E/2003/93), in which the Working Group proposed amendments to articles I (Statute and purpose), III (Board of Trustees) and IV (Director and staff).

8. In a note to the Council (E/2003/101), the Secretary-General drew attention to the fact that some of the proposals made by the Working Group in the above-mentioned letter did not reflect the full scope of the General Assembly's endorsement, in its resolution 57/175, of the Working Group's earlier recommendations in document A/57/330 relating to the INSTRAW statute.

9. In its resolution 2003/57, the Council decided to maintain the autonomous status of INSTRAW and to replace the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW by an Executive Board, which will be composed of two governmental representatives from each of the five regional groups to be elected by the Council for three years. The Board will meet at United Nations Headquarters in New York at least once a year. The Council will hold elections, in accordance with article III of the revised statute of INSTRAW, for the Executive Board of INSTRAW on 31 October 2003 (see E/2003/L.3/Add.13).

B. Implementation of the Institute's work programme

10. In following up the measures endorsed by the General Assembly, the Institute, with substantive advice and administrative support from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, continued the implementation of a modest work programme consisting of research and information/networking activities, mostly conducted through the Gender Awareness and Information Networking System (GAINS). INSTRAW prepared papers on gender and financing for development, men's roles and responsibilities in women's sexual and reproductive health, and the gender gap in information and communication technologies (ICTs). At the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York in March 2003, INSTRAW, in cooperation with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, launched a publication entitled *Partners in Change: Working with Men to End Gender-Based Violence*. Further details on the Institute's activities are contained in the report of the Board of Trustees (see E/2003/59, sect. III).

C. Post of Deputy Director and liaison with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

11. The Secretary-General was unable to implement the General Assembly's endorsement of the creation of the post of Deputy Director with specific fund-raising responsibilities and the establishment of a liaison function for INSTRAW in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, due to the lack of adequate financial resources for this purpose in the INSTRAW trust fund.

D. Appointment of a Director

12. In paragraph 9 (a) of its resolution 57/175, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to appoint, without delay and in consultation with the Working Group, a Director to be chosen from among candidates who demonstrated knowledge and expertise in, inter alia, gender issues and social research. In pursuing that request, the Secretariat has been working closely with the Working Group.

13. The Secretariat is keenly aware of the urgent need to appoint a Director who has the requisite qualifications and fully shares the concerns expressed by Member States with regard to the continued absence of the leadership in INSTRAW. Given the lack of funds available in early 2003 to appoint a Director, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs convened a meeting on 12 February 2003 with donors and interested Member States, at which Member States were provided with information on the financial situation of INSTRAW and forecasts for 2003 and, two countries pledged contributions to the INSTRAW Trust Fund as reported by the Working Group in its report to the Commission on the Status of Women. At a follow-up meeting between the Working Group and the Under-Secretary-General on 2 May 2003, an additional oral pledge was made by one country.

14. Throughout 2003, joint efforts of the Secretariat and the Chairperson of the Working Group have been pursued to identify a qualified candidate for the post of the Director, so far without success. In the spirit of cooperation and consultation, the Secretariat recently forwarded to the Group for its consideration a list of candidates who meet the requirements set out in resolutions 57/175 and 57/311.

E. Improving institutional cooperation and partnerships

15. The General Assembly had called for increased coordination between INSTRAW and other United Nations bodies working in the field of gender equality and advancement of women, through close cooperation with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. The Institute participated in the second meeting of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) held from 24 to 27 February 2003. INSTRAW, as a member of the IANWGE Task Force on Information and Communication Technologies, has contributed material for an IANWGE kit on gender and information and communication technology to be distributed, in connection with the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society.

F. Allocation of a $500,000 subsidy from the regular budget to INSTRAW

16. As requested in General Assembly decision 57/580, the financial situation of INSTRAW as of April 2003 was set out in detail in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/797). In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/311, the Secretariat transferred the amount of $250,000 to the Trust Fund for INSTRAW in June 2003, which represented the second tranche of the regular budget subsidy of $500,000 that was set aside in the contingency fund for the biennium 2002-2003 in accordance with General Assembly decision 57/580.

III. Management of INSTRAW

17. During the reporting period, two interim managers/directors were appointed from 24 June to 31 December 2002. During the remaining period, the Institute was managed by the Officer-in-Charge, acting under the supervision of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. The only two Professional staff members at the Institute decided not to have their contracts renewed; efforts are being made to fill the vacant posts on a temporary basis.

18. During the period from 26 to 30 May 2003, an external audit was conducted on INSTRAW's follow-up to previous external audit recommendations, including recommendations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services and progress in the implementation of the work programme for 2002. The results of the external audit will be reported to Member States once a management letter is received.

IV. Conclusions

19. **Despite the efforts of both the Working Group on the Future Operation of INSTRAW and the Secretariat to implement the institutional reform of INSTRAW endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/175, no progress has been achieved.**

20. **Largely due to the $500,000 subsidy from the regular budget and savings resulting from vacancies in INSTRAW, the Institute will be able to continue to operate at a minimal level only until the end of May 2004. A separate report of the Secretary-General, which will outline more details on the financial situation of INSTRAW, will be submitted to the General Assembly in accordance with its resolution 57/311. The precarious financial situation precludes long-term planning and programming in both administrative and substantive terms, and the capacity of the Institute to contribute in any meaningful and effective way to the advancement of women and gender equality continues to deteriorate.**